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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan today announced the appointment of four members to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, established in 1990 to guide the purchase, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands vital to the environmental health of North America.

"This Council has been extremely effective in carrying out President Bush's commitment to the stewardship of America's natural resources," Lujan said. "In the first two years, it has recommended 164 projects totalling \$56 million in funding through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. These Federal dollars have been matched by an impressive \$103 million in funding from non-Federal partners."

Lujan noted that 250 partners were involved in these wetlands projects in Canada, Mexico, and this country. "Hundreds of species of wildlife benefitted from these projects, from white-tailed deer and migrating shorebirds to the endangered whooping crane," Lujan said.

(over)

Appointed to the nine-member Council were Boyd H. Gibbons, Director of the California Department of Fish and Game, and Wayne R. LaPierre, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association. Two members were reappointed: William O. Montoya, Director of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, and Michael Dennis, Vice President and General Counsel of The Nature Conservancy.

The Council was established by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1989 to evaluate wetlands projects and assign priorities for funding. Composed of Federal, State, and private members who are actively involved in wetlands conservation, the Council recommends projects to the existing, Cabinet-level Migratory Bird Conservation Commission, which approves the projects for funding.

The Act authorizes annual appropriations for wetlands conservation projects of up to \$15 million and an additional sum of about \$10 million a year from a special trust fund composed of interest on Federal excise taxes from hunting equipment sales, fines, penalties and forfeitures.

The legislation provided new impetus to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, a major international agreement among the United States, Canada, and Mexico to improve 6 million acres of wetlands and restore waterfowl populations by the year 2000. The law also provided new funding for wetland habitats that support endangered species, nongame birds, and other animals and plants.

Other members of the Council include Matthew B. Connolly, Executive Vice President, Ducks Unlimited; Gary Myers, Executive Director, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; and James A. Timmerman, Jr., Executive Director, South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department.

John F. Turner, as Director of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and Amos Eno, as Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, are permanent members of the Council.